[8] Ibid, p. 25.

[9] *Robert Service: a Biography* (Toronto, 1976), p. 116.

[10] *Harper,* p. 67.

[11] Ibid, p. 67.

[12] Ibid, p. 72.

[13] *Collected Poems of Robert Service* (London, 1978), p. 308; *Burns. Poems and Songs,* ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1978), p. 251. All further page references in the text to Service's and Burns's poems are to these editions.

[14] Sean O' Casey makes a similar point in *The Silver Tassie* when he has soldiers at the Front receive a prayer-book and a rubber ball from those at home: *The Silver Tassie* (London, 1928), p. 62. (Ironically, the title of the play is taken from another poem by Burns, "My Bony Mary").

[15] *Harper,* p. 73.

[16] *The Poems of Robert Fergusson,* ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid (Edinburgh & London, 1956), II, p. 106. All other references in the text to Fergusson's poetry are to this volume and this edition.

[17] Thomas Crawford, *Burns. A Study of the Poems and Songs* (Edinburgh & London, 1960), p. 222.

[18] Ibid, p. 149.

[19] *Ploughman,* p. 140.

[20] *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson,* ed. Sidney Colvin (London, 1911), III, 256.

Graham Tulloch

Imagery in *The Highland Widow*

The overt central theme of Scott's *Highland Widow* is obvious enough and generally agreed on. The story deals with the passing of the old Highland values of those who "esteemed it shame to want anything that could be had for the taking" (p. 407)[1] and the imposition of new "civilised" values appropriate to a "settled government of laws, that protect the property of the weak against the incursions of the strong" (p. 414). This change followed the failure of the 1745 rebellion and, as Lord David Cecil expresses it, involved "the gradual extinction of the old Highland society beneath the encroaching strength of England."[2] It would seem that the narrator sees the change as inevitable and Elspat's attempt to live by the old values as misguided. Hamish, we are told, sees the reality of the situation: "the young see the present state of this changeful world more keenly than the old" (p. 409). He recognizes his mother's views as "erroneous" (p. 410). Nevertheless, as usual in Scott, the readers, however much they may accept the inevitability of the change, feel some regret at the passing of men like MacTavish Mhor, whose death is impressive, whatever his life has been. Moreover they will tend to suspect that something of this regret is shared by the author. Scott cannot have been unaware of the similarity between

MacTavish Mhor's exploits and those of his own Border ancestors, from whom he was proud to be descended. We are told how

> The creagh is yet remembered in which he swept one hundred and fifty cows from Monteith in one drove; and how he placed the Laird of Ballybught naked in a slough, for having threatened to send for a party of the Highland Watch to protect his property (p. 407).

Popular tradition preserves these stories just as the popular ballads preserved the traditional stories of the raiding Scots.

How then are we meant to feel about this story from the past? One possible way to examine some of the issues at stake is to look at the imagery. There is a persistent strain throughout the story of imagery of the natural world: animals, birds, hills, clouds. An examination of how these images are used provides us with some interesting hints as to how we should respond to the events and characters.

A great deal of this natural imagery is associated with Elspat. She is, of course, "the Woman of the Tree" (pp. 405, 454, 457) to the people of the surrounding district. Further, to reinforce the impression of her association with Nature, the first description of her hut makes it appear that her home has almost completely merged with the natural world:

> It was a hut of the least dimensions, and most miserable description, that I ever saw even in the Highlands. The walls of sod, or 'divot,' as the Scotch call it, were not four feet high; the roof was of turf, repaired with reeds and sedges; the chimney was composed of clay, bound round by straw ropes; and the whole walls, roof, and chimney were alike covered with the vegetation of house-leek, rye-grass, and moss, common to decayed cottages formed of such materials. There was not the slightest vestige of a kale-yard, the usual accompaniment of the very worst huts; and of living things we saw nothing, save a kid which was browsing on the roof of the hut, and a goat, its mother, at some distance, feeding betwixt the oak and the river Awe (pp. 403-4).

Elspat herself tends to see human behavior in terms of animals and Nature. To her, Hamish has a choice between slavery and freedom. Her metaphor for freedom is the condition of the wild creatures of the mountains and for slavery the condition of domestic animals. "To her, Hamish was the eagle who had only to soar aloft and resume his native place in the skies" (p. 415) while her "proud thought" was that it was better to have seen her husband die in battle "than to have witnessed his departure from life in a smoky hovel, on a bed of rotten straw, like an over-worn hound or a bullock which died of disease" (pp. 415-16). Hamish's submission to the "Saxon" in joining the army, she sees as opening him to punishment like "a disobedient hound" (p. 424) and later she accuses him of being "an idle, poor-spirited, unintelligent boy, who crouches like a hound to the lash" (p. 438). Further on still, she reverts to the other image she had used in describing what her husband's death had avoided:

> MacTavish Mhor died as became the brave, with his good sword in his right hand; my son will perish like the bullock that is driven to the shambles by the Saxon owner who has bought him for a price (p. 441).

Elsewhere she has a slightly different image, associating courage and freedom with the predator and timidity and thraldom with the prey. She compares a free Hamish, following in the footsteps of his father, to a wolf: "the bold wolf walks in the red light of the harvest-moon" (p. 418), and in upbraiding Hamish for his acceptance of change and what she sees as slavery, she asserts "you are like the fearful waterfowl, to whom the least cloud in the sky seems the shadow of the eagle" (p. 421). In other images Elspat calls the Gaels "the children of the mountains" (p. 430), thus associating them with the wildest parts of nature, and claims that Hamish's father was as free as the wind and the clouds (p. 424).

As well as all this, Elspat applies natural imagery to herself, comparing herself with a hind and "the cat of the mountains" (p. 439) and, when she wishes to express her willingness to follow Hamish anywhere if he becomes a cateran, she asks "think you that I am like a bush, that is rooted to the soil where it grows, and must die if carried elsewhere?" (p. 420). This last question proves to be ironic since it is Elspat's very unwillingness to be

moved (metaphorically) which leads to her becoming rooted in one place as the "Woman of the Tree."

All of this imagery, so forcefully expressed and so frequently used by Elspat, must begin to affect the reader's response to the events. The images reinforce Elspat's view that the old ways are freedom and the new ways thraldom since it is hard not to be at least somewhat swayed by the generally positive images of freedom and the very negative images of slavery. However, we must not forget that Elspat's views are, according to the narrator's endorsement of Hamish's opinion, "erroneous." Nor are we distanced from her point of view by this comment alone. The narrative context has also been carefully manipulated to distance us from Elspat. Firstly, the tale begins with an elaborate introduction by Mrs. Bethune Baliol which puts the events of the story firmly in the past. The whole thrust of this introduction is to suggest that the story belongs to a past state of affairs now superseded and remembered only by the elderly. Furthermore, there is a curious feature of the narrative. While it begins in the voice of Mrs. Baliol, it ends in the voice of Chrystal Croftangry (see p. 456). Whether or not we consider this a blemish in the presentation of the story (and certainly Scott provides us with no explanation of the changeover) the effect is to give the story two narrators. Now Chrystal Croftangry has himself had seven chapters of introduction to his collection of tales, of which this is the first tale. As Teut Andreas Riese points out, the central concern of these chapters is "the irretrievability of the past." Croftangry realizes the "futility of the attempt to call back a life which has been swallowed up by time."[3] Given the message inherent in these introductory chapters it is fairly safe to see Croftangry as a supporter of the view that condemns Elspat's attempts to revitalize the past.

The reader is also distanced from the events by historical knowledge. As readers we know that the old Highland lifestyle did in fact pass irretrievably away. We know that Elspat's attempts to turn back the clock have no chance of success. The way of progress lies forwards, not backwards. This is made especially clear with one specific issue. One of the things that Elspat most regrets is the prohibition on wearing Highland dress. She longs to see Hamish wearing the "romantic garb" (p. 410) of the Gael. Ironically she rejects the means, the only means, which Hamish has found to do so legally, namely joining one of

the Highland regiments which were allowed to wear Highland dress. A historical perspective adds further irony. Scott and his readers know that by his time the Highland dress was no longer proscribed. The prohibition on its being worn was lifted in 1782. Indeed Scott himself presided over a grand festival of the wearing of the tartan on the occasion of George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822. The way to restoration of the Highland dress is not by reverting to the old world, as Elspat desires, but by moving forward into the new.

The narrators, then, and our knowledge of history appear to counteract Elspat's views. Service in the Highland regiments, which she sees as slavery, the life of the hound and the bullock, is, according to the narrator, the scheme of "the great and wise Earl of Chatham" (p. 432). Elspat is wrong, however eloquent.

Yet when we return again to the imagery a slightly different picture emerges. The imagery is, at first sight anyway, subversive. The images discussed so far are those used by Elspat. If the narrators disagree with her we would expect their images to point in a different direction. Yet interestingly the narrators in fact themselves employ her imagery while apparently rejecting her views. Elspat saw Hamish as an eagle: the narrator says that Hamish had "an eye like an eagle" (p. 409) and moved "with the speed of an eagle" (p. 434). Similarly, just as Elspat sees the "thraldom" of being a soldier as like the life of a hound, so the narrator describes the soldiers coming to arrest Hamish as moving in files "still keeping together like coupled greyhounds" and as "eagerly making towards him, like hounds towards the stag when he is at bay" (p. 444). The latter description also embodies another of Elspat's images: Hamish has become the prey (the stag) rather than the bold predator (the wolf). (Ironically it is through Elspat's interference that Hamish has fallen into this role, although she does not see this). Likewise, Elspat's comparison of herself with various animals is paralleled by the narrator's description of her as having a step "firm as that of the wild goat" and as dashing from the hut "like a lapwing" (p. 438). Further, Elspat's answer to Hamish's question "wherefore have you returned hither?", "Ask why the hind comes back to the fawn, ... why the cat of the mountain returns to her lodge and her young" (p. 439), is endorsed by the narrator's comment that "her ardent, though selfish, affection for her son ... resembled the instinctive fondness of the animal race for their offspring" (p.

426). Indeed the very last comment made about her stresses this element of animal instinct in Elspat. The story ends with the minister's view of Elspat's death:

> He thought that, impatient of the watch which was placed over her, this unhappy woman's instinct had taught her, as it directs various domestic animals, to withdraw herself from the sight of her own race, that the death-struggle might take place in some secret den, where, in all probability, her mortal relics would never meet the eyes of mortals. This species of instinctive feeling seemed to him of a tenor with the whole course of her unhappy life, and most likely to influence her when it drew to a conclusion (p. 458).

Not only does this corroborate Elspat's view of her having instinctive feelings like animals, it also endorses her opinion that, for her at least, the only freedom lies in an escape like that of a domestic animal going back into the wild. In addition the minister continues the association of Elspat with the natural world, in particular trees and specifically the oak-tree under which she sits, by comparing her offspring Hamish at his death to a young oak (p. 452).

The minister's endorsement of Elspat's imagery is as significant as the narrators' similar endorsement. The presentation of him as a man without the superstitious fears belonging to the past (pp. 452-3) has allied him with Chrystal Croftangry and Mrs. Baliol as representatives of present-day views. Yet, while the present-day view is one which rejects Elspat's views as erroneous, we find these same representatives of that contrary view adopting the very imagery she uses to express *her* views and thus, apparently, in some measure covertly supporting her views.

So far then, we might consider this story as another case of what Seamus Cooney argues *The Two Drovers* to be, that is a tale in which the emotional logic (here represented by the imagery) runs counter to the overt meaning.[4] Yet I believe the situation is in fact rather different, and even more complex. While I have argued that Elspat's images are powerful and persuasive and are apparently endorsed by the narrators and the minister, despite their condemnation of her views, we now have to note that there

are certain qualifications of the effect of her images. Firstly, even if the narrators and the minister agree with Elspat's assessment of her emotions as instinctive like those of animals, they express the notion in a quite different way and with a quite different effect. Elspat's comparison of herself to the hind and the mountain cat is a powerful emotional plea for the acceptance of her behavior, whereas the more scientific language of the narrators and minister allows us to recognize the limitations of such instinctive behavior. A greater element of logic in Elspat's make-up, it is tacitly suggested, might have averted the whole tragedy. Secondly, while Elspat's free wolves and eagles may be more attractive than her enthralled hounds and bullocks, there is another way of viewing the predators. This is supplied by the Cameron women relatives of the man Hamish has killed, who call Hamish a "bloody wolf-burd," explained in a footnote[5] as "wolf-brood, *i.e.* wolf-cub" (p. 446; see also p. 447). Here the noble, free wolf is seen in quite a different light. Further, there is little suggestion of noble freedom in the fate one of these women sees for Hamish and his mother: "The ravens shall eat him from the gibbet, and the foxes and wild-cats shall tear thy corpse upon the hill" (p. 446). Here are images of wild animals used quite differently from the way Elspat uses them. Similarly, when one of the mourning women claims that "blood has been as familiar to [Elspat] as the dew to the mountain daisy" (p. 447) this to some extent undermines the positive connotations both of Elspat's comparisons of herself with the features of the natural world and of her association with the emblem of her husband's family, the cloudberry, "a scarlet fruit, which is only found on very high hills" (p. 417), which she uses to decorate her hut for Hamish's return.

Finally, a qualification of her imagery is offered by Elspat herself. Despite her condemnation of domestic animals as slaves, Elspat calls Hamish, in the Gaelic phrase, "calf of her heart" (pp. 412, 430) thus associating him with the domesticated cow. Of course the contradicion reflects a central ambiguity in Elspat's attitude to her son; she wants him to be free, but she wants him to obey her. The phrase calls into question, without completely invalidating them, the views Elspat has expressed in her images of eagles, wolves, bullocks and hounds.

Indeed the effect of all these qualifications of Elspat's imagery is the same: they raise questions about her views but do

not totally overturn them. If the narrators' and minister's view of instinctive behavior are less positive than Elspat's, they nevertheless seem to share her enthusiasm for comparing men and eagles. If the Cameron women present another side to the wolves, their view tends to be overshadowed by Elspat's impressive, all-absorbing grief. And if the calf image contradicts some of Elspat's other images, it is not powerful enough to supplant them.

Where then do we stand? Robert C. Gordon, having looked at the non-fictional evidence of Scott's attitudes to the Highlands, and noting that Scott at first sight seems to be torn between admiration for the new enlightened order and regret at the passing of the old heroic order, argues that the "apparent dualism will be seen to reflect an underlying consistency."[6] He shows how Scott saw the Highlanders as a valuable fighting force for the defense of Britain, if the old loyalties could be directed away from clan rivalry and the furtherance of the selfish desires of chiefs, and placed "in the service of the state rather than of the patriarch" (p. 131). To do this some regimentation would be necessary. The question is how much. Gordon's conclusion is that

> Scott was a backward-looking man, committed to the idea of a local force, serving the purpose of both defence and social cohesion, organically related to the land and its patterns of work. This was one of the true and unshaded absolutes of his life. His insistence ... that freedom and order were `best defended by freemen arrayd under the sanction of the laws and with their own good weapons in their hands', is the credo underlying his years of active dedication to the yeomanry of the Border. This commitment does not preclude an endorsement of regimentation when needed. Still, it is unambiguous in its assertion that the roots of true strength are in local attachment and regional enthusiasm. The rest is, in comparison, alienated labour (p. 139).[7]

It would seem then that regimentation is necessary to ensure that the Highlanders' martial spirit is properly harnessed to the service of the state but not to the point where it endangers "local attachment and regional enthusiasm." What this means in terms

of *The Highland Widow* is that Scott approves of the ending of Highland lawlessness but at the same time wishes to redirect the martial energies used in the old lawless world into the service of the state through the new Highland regiments. This may seem to be simply an endorsement of Hamish's views and a rejection of Elspat's unless we give sufficient weight to Scott's view that liberty and good government were "best defended by freemen arrayd under the sanction of the laws and with their own good weapons in their hands." This is exactly what the Highland regiments were supposed to provide and what Hamish accepts, but in one essential it overlaps with Elspat's view as well and that is in its emphasis on "freemen." To be effective such soldiers must be "free."

It is now possible to see some pattern in the use of imagery. Elspat has two images of freedom: wild creatures and predators. The first can be generally endorsed. While disagreeing with Elspat's view that freedom cannot be retained in a Highland regiment, the narrators and the minister agree with her on the importance of the Highlanders remaining free. Hence they can use her imagery of eagles and other wild creatures. However, her other image of freedom, the predator, cannot be endorsed since it entails a view of freedom Scott and his narrators cannot accept, that freedom means the old Highland life style of raiding and blackmail. This is the old lawless world which must be rejected. Hence the images of predators, used positively by Elspat, are elsewhere in the story given strongly negative associations.

The obverse of Elspat's view of freedom as like the life of free, wild animals is her depiction of slavery as like the life of the hound and the bullock. Since Scott sees freedom as compatible with service in a Highland regiment, we might not expect him to apply images of hounds to Highland soldiers. Yet, as we have seen, he does. In this connection we should remember that Scott, however admiring of the general scheme of enlisting the Highlanders in regiments, was nevertheless not committed to more regimentation than was strictly needed to harness their fighting abilities to the service of the state. In the story there is some muted suggestion that regimentation may have gone at least a little too far. Green Colin ascribes General —'s "unalterable purpose" to execute Hamish to his being "half a Lowlander, half an Englishman" (p. 449). In other words he is

not very sympathetic to the special character of the Highlanders, whereas Scott himself, Gordon argues, believed the Highlanders possessed an "inalienable right to be themselves" (p. 132).[8] If, then, Scott himself had some doubts as to whether regimentation might sometimes have gone too far, it is not after all surprising that his narrators should apply to the soldiers Elspat's image of hounds. In so far as freedom was, in his view, necessary for preserving the martial spirit of the Highlanders while regimentation was needed to prevent lawless chaos, Scott must have been concerned that the necessary balance between the two would sometimes be disturbed in favor of one or the other. His use of the hound imagery for the soldiers may be taken to imply that, in this case, the balance had slipped too far in favor of regimentation.

On further examination then, the imagery can be seen as supporting a complex but consistent view of historical change in the Highlands. To sum it up in terms of the central characters, Elspat is "erroneous" in trying to revive the old lawless ways but right to value freedom; Hamish is right to join the Highland regiment but, in so far as no such institution is perfect, he may compromise his freedom in doing so. What the imagery does is remind us that there is, here, no simple endorsement of the present and rejection of the past, but a complex attempt to sort out what is good and bad in both past and present.

The Flinders University of South Australia

NOTES

[1] References to *The Highland Widow,* given in parenthesis in the text, are to the Dryburgh Edition of the Waverley Novels (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1892-4). *The Highland Widow* appears in Volume 19.

[2] See his introduction to the World's Classics edition of Scott's *Short Stories* (London, 1934), p. xiv.

[3] "Sir Walter Scott as a Master of the Short Tale," in *Festschrift Prof. Dr. Herbert Koziol,* ed. Gero Bauer et al. (Vienna, 1973), p. 258.

[4] "Scott and Cultural Relativism: 'The Two *Drovers,*'" *Studies in Short Fiction, 15* (1978), 1-9. See especially p. 7.

[5] In the Dryburgh Edition the original footnote has been transferred to the Glossary.

[6] "Scott and the Highlanders: The Non-Fictional Evidence," *Yearbook of English Studies,* 6 (1976), p. 120.

[7] The Scott quotation is from a letter to Morritt. See his *Letters,* 12 vols, ed. H.J.C. Grierson (London, 1932-37), X, 338.

[8] Scott quotes, in a note to *The Highland Widow,* an account of a remarkable case of a private in the Breadalbane Fencibles who offended against the laws of military discipline but at the same time showed an extraordinary fidelity to his word, characteristic, according to Scott, of the Highlanders. The account ends with the question: "Are these a people to be treated as malefactors, without regard to their feelings and principles; and might not a discipline somewhat different from the usual mode be, with advantage, applied to them?" (p. 483).